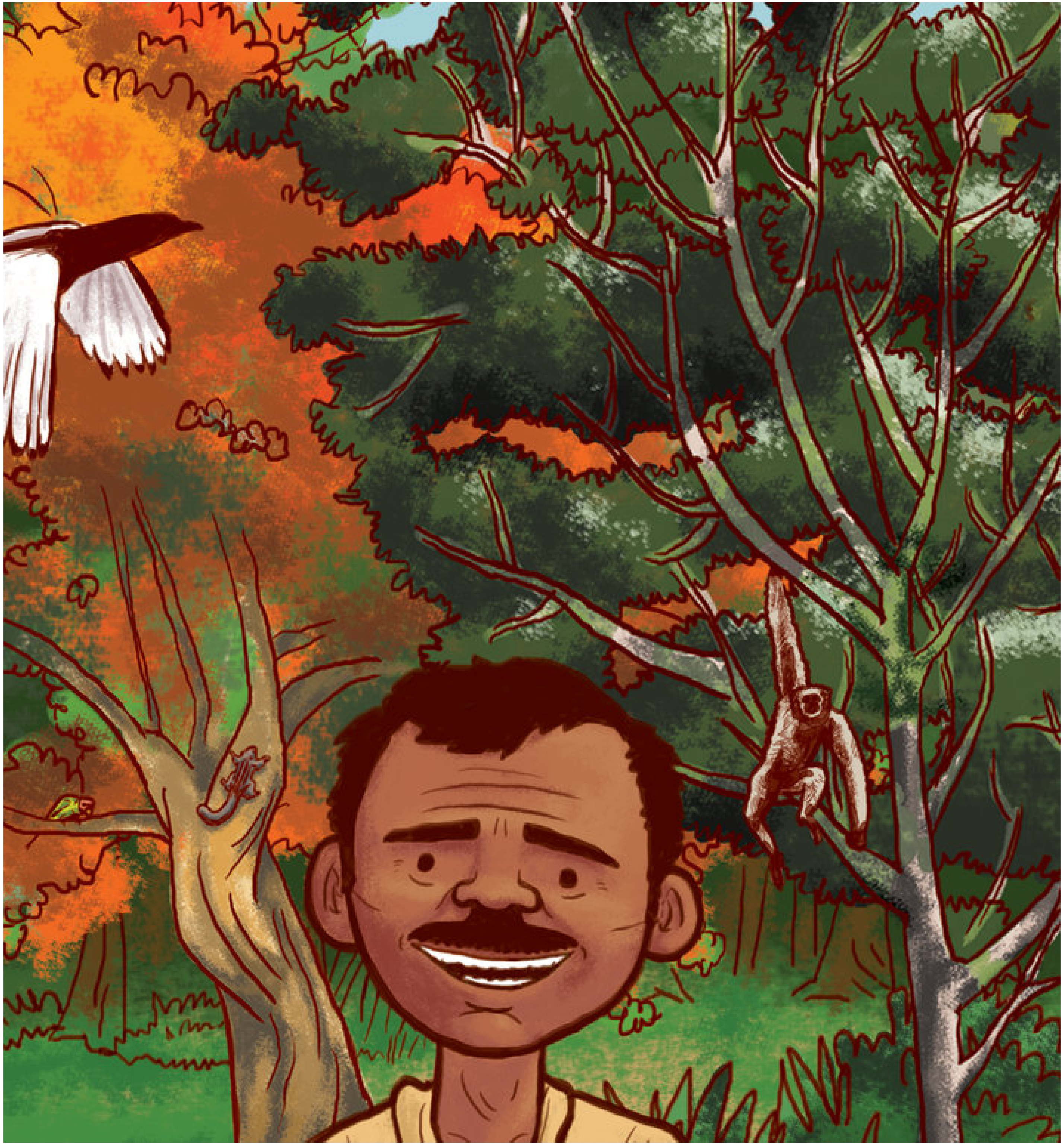


Jadav and the Tree-Place

Author: Vinayak Varma
Illustrator: Vinayak Varma

Level 3



This is Jadav, a tree-planter.

He loves tree-places because they are full of life.

No-tree-places make him terribly sad, because they are full of dead things.



Years ago, Jadav was walking along the banks of the great Brahmaputra River when he arrived at a big, empty no-tree-place.

It was dry and hot. The sand was powdery and striped.

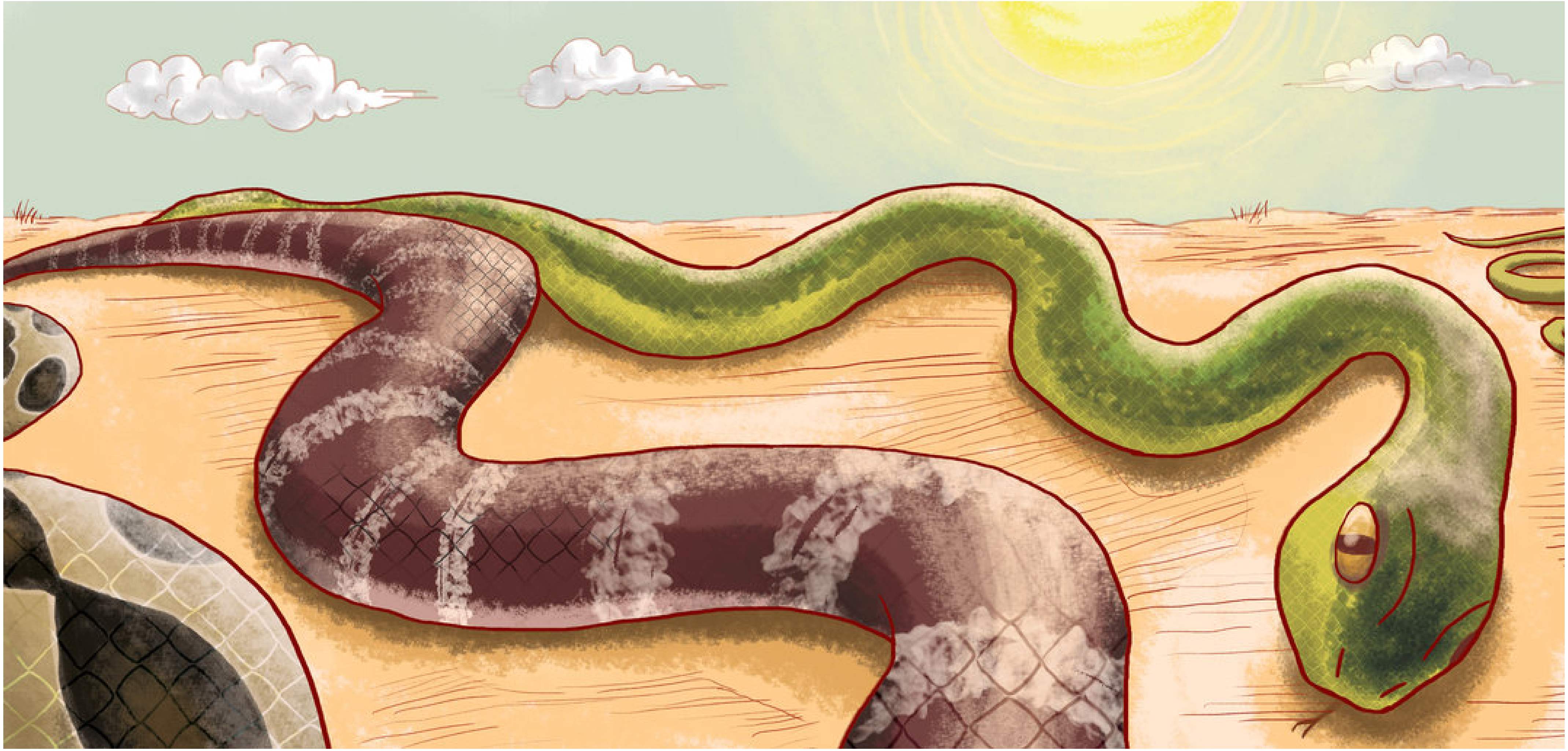


Striped sand? How odd.

Jadav went closer to take a better look.

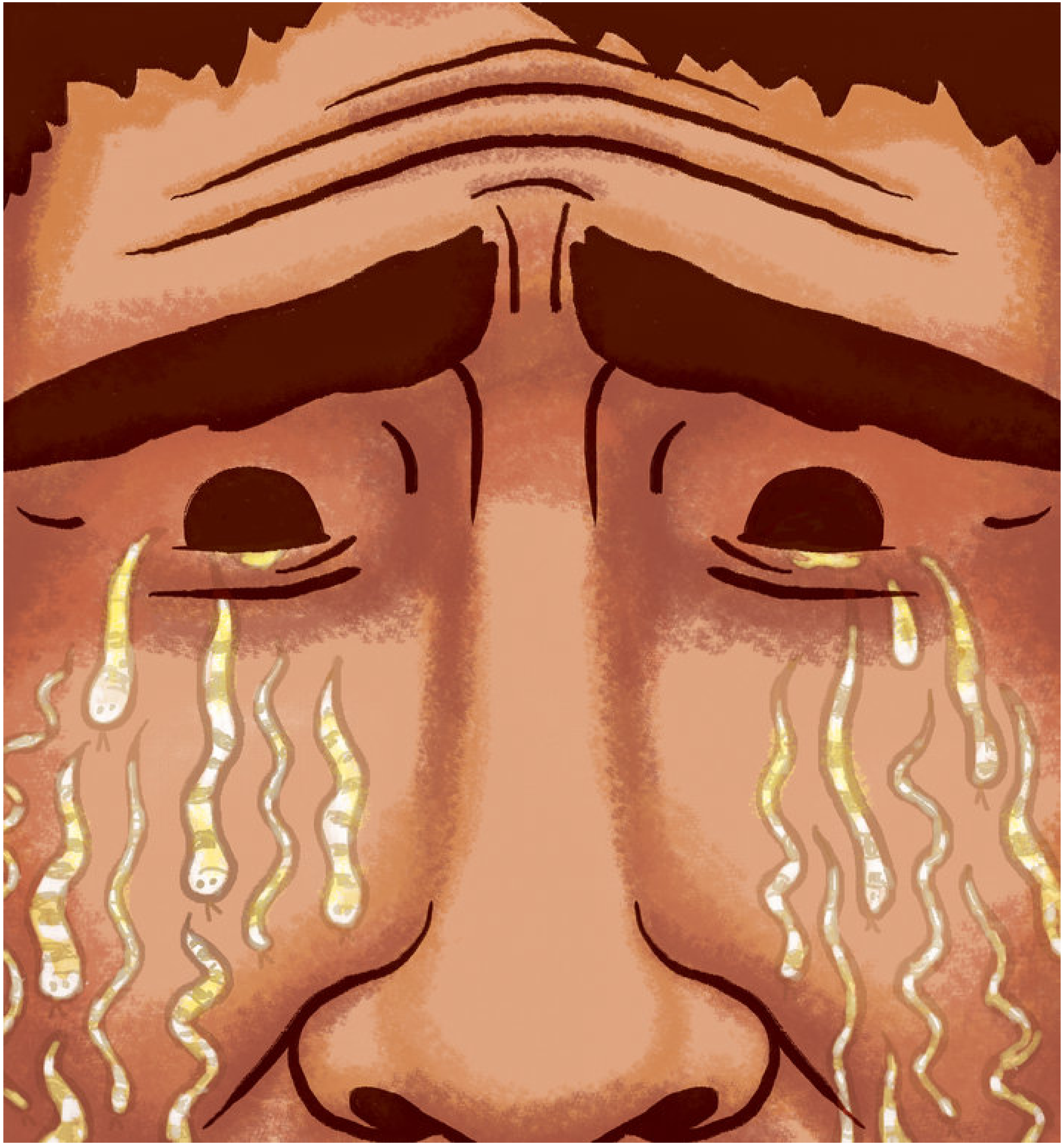
Oh, but they weren't stripes at all! The ground was covered in snakes!

Last night’s floods must have washed them ashore, Jadav thought.



These snakes weren't slinking and slithering and swaying about like regular, healthy snakes. When Jadav walked among them, they didn't hiss or run away or try to bite him. They just lay about like old ropes, tired and still.

"Poor snakes! They're dying from the heat! If only they had some shade to lie in! If only this no-tree-place had some trees in it!"



Jadav couldn't bear to watch the snakes die. It made him so terribly sad that he sat down and began to cry.

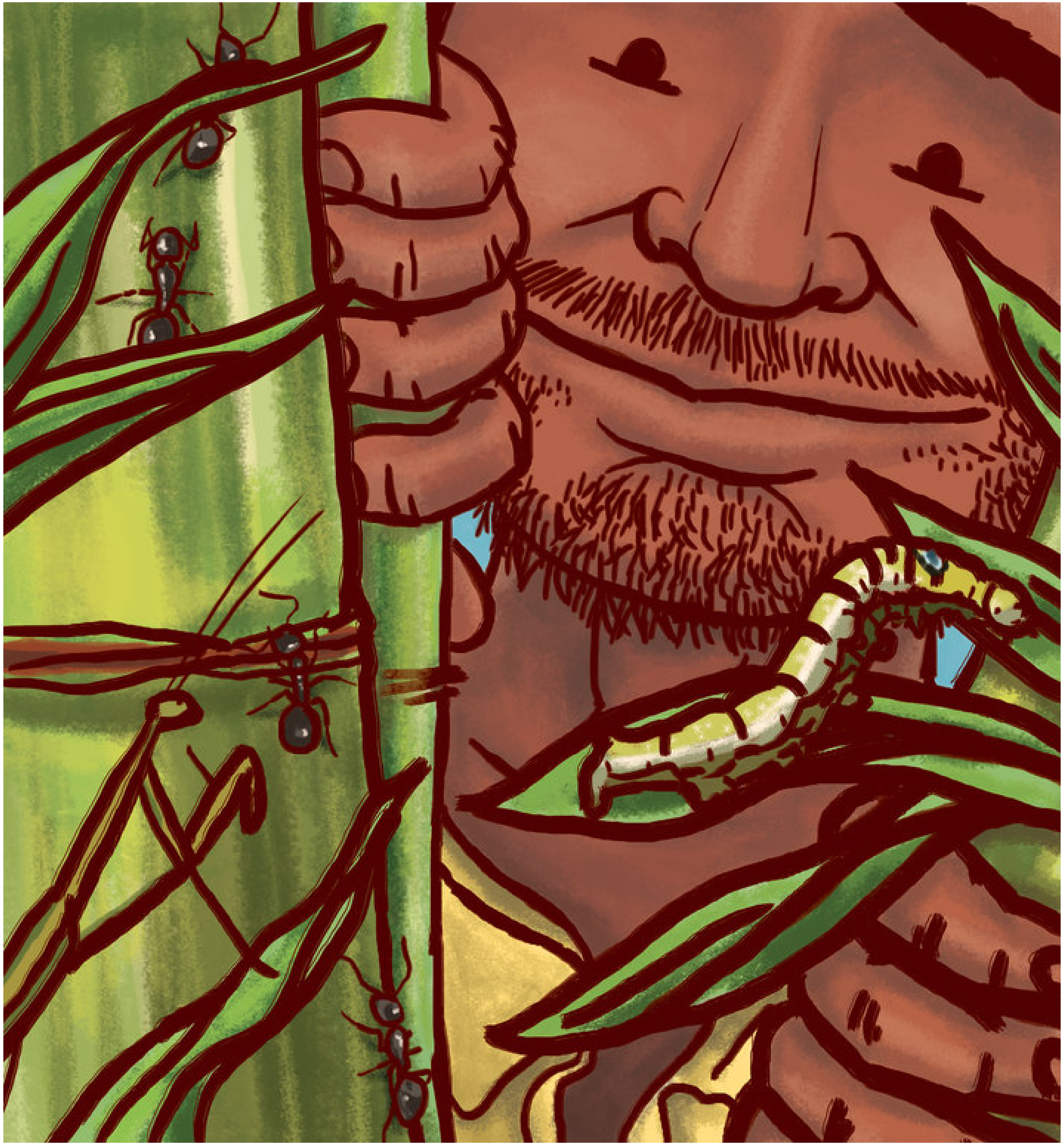
But he quickly came to his senses. "No more crying. From now on: only trying!"

He jumped up, ran back to his village and began collecting all the bamboo shoots he could carry in his bag. "Regular plants won't grow in the hot sand, but bamboo will. Bamboo is strong!"



Jadav brought the shoots to the no-tree-place and started planting them everywhere. It was hard, hot work, and it took years.

The river grew thin one summer and flooded the next, sometimes bringing more sand and sometimes taking it away. Heavy rains came and went. But Jadav kept on planting.



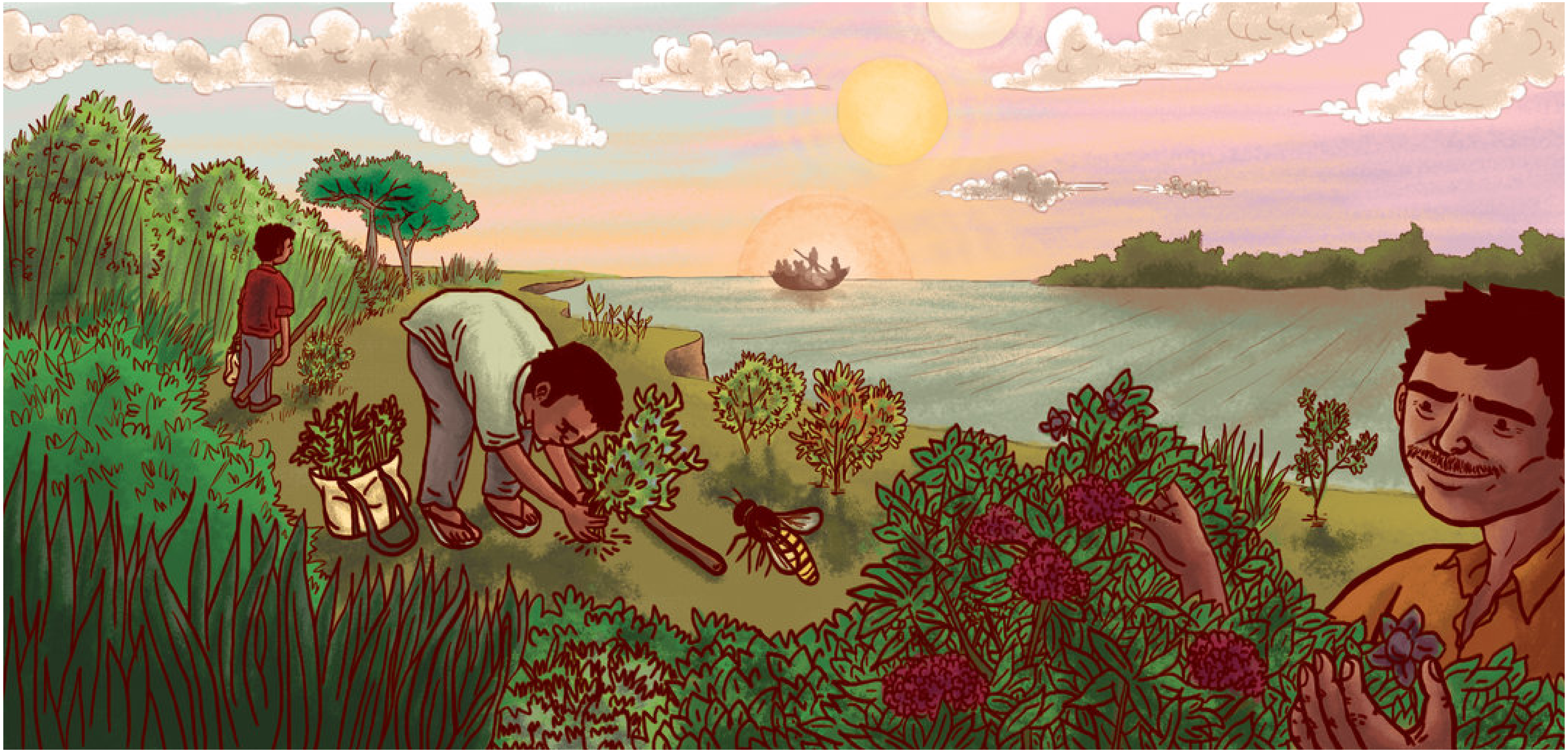
In time, the bamboo took root and began to grow. As it grew, it brought shade, and the shade brought insects.

The insects burrowed into the ground, and the earth below the bamboo trees began to change. The dry and white became rich and brown, and the dead sand became living soil.

Jadav was no longer sad. But he wasn't happy either.

He looked around his bamboo grove and thought, "A few-trees-place is nice, I know. But how wonderful it would be if this were a many-trees-place!" The idea thrilled him.

So Jadav went back to his village and began collecting many more seeds and saplings. He filled three big bags with Arjun and ejar and gulmohar and koroi and moj and himolu. "Now that our few-trees-place has lovely brown soil, we can plant all these and more!"



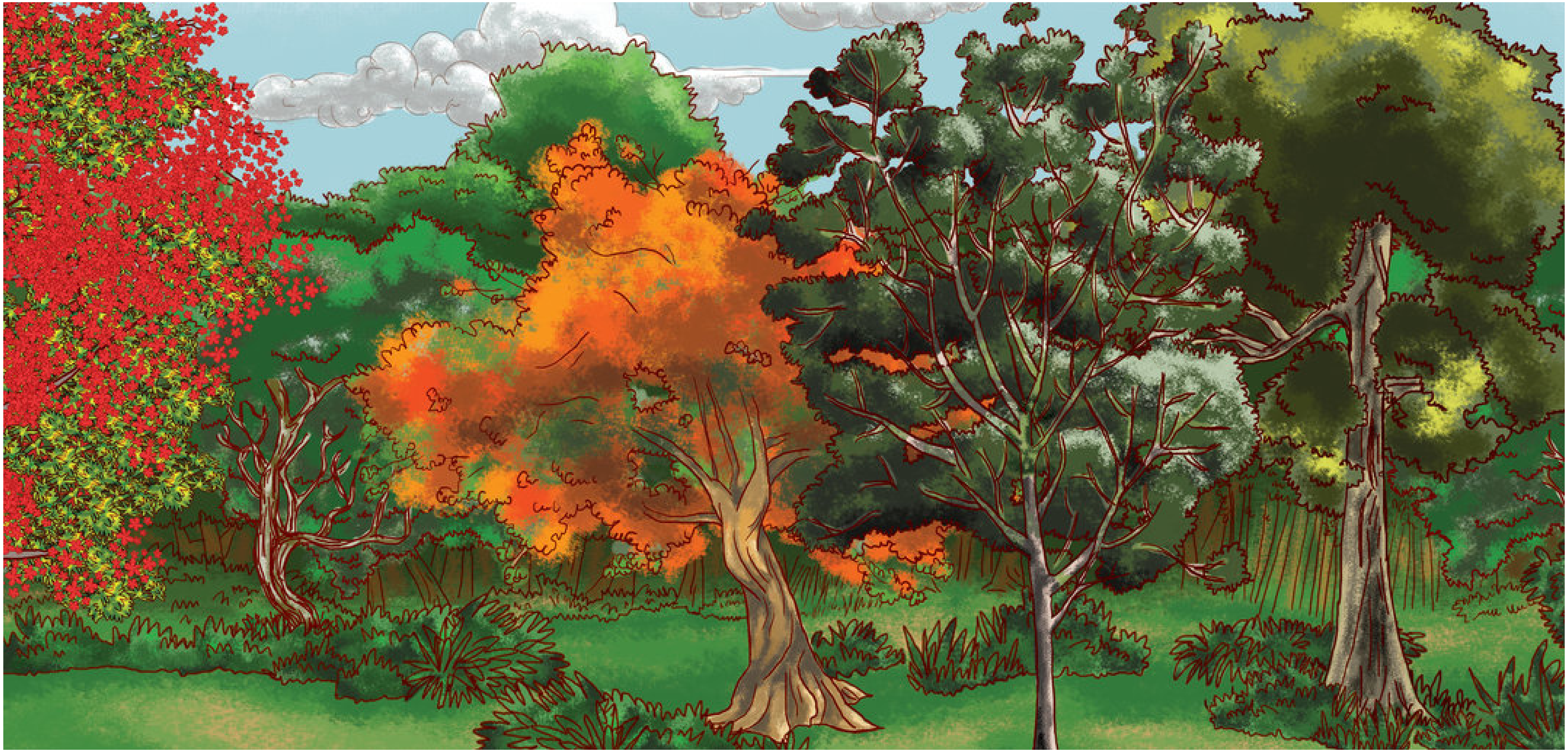
Jadav brought his new saplings and seeds to the few-trees-place and planted them all around.

It was hard work, his back hurt, and it took many years. The orange and blue skies turned purple and pink, and villages became towns. The wind grew laden with dust, and the river became grey. But Jadav's insect friends helped to till the soil, and his tall bamboos gave him shade and cooled the air. And Jadav kept on planting.



Soon, his Arjun, ejar and gulmohar, his koroi, moj and himolu, and all his many other plants dug in, took root and started growing.

As they grew, they spread new seeds, and the new seeds, in turn, took root. Shoots became trunks, trunks grew branches, and the branches reached for the sky.



The few-trees-place that was once a no-tree-place now became a wonderful, green many-trees-place.

But what's a many-trees-place without many tree-creatures? When one came, the others followed.



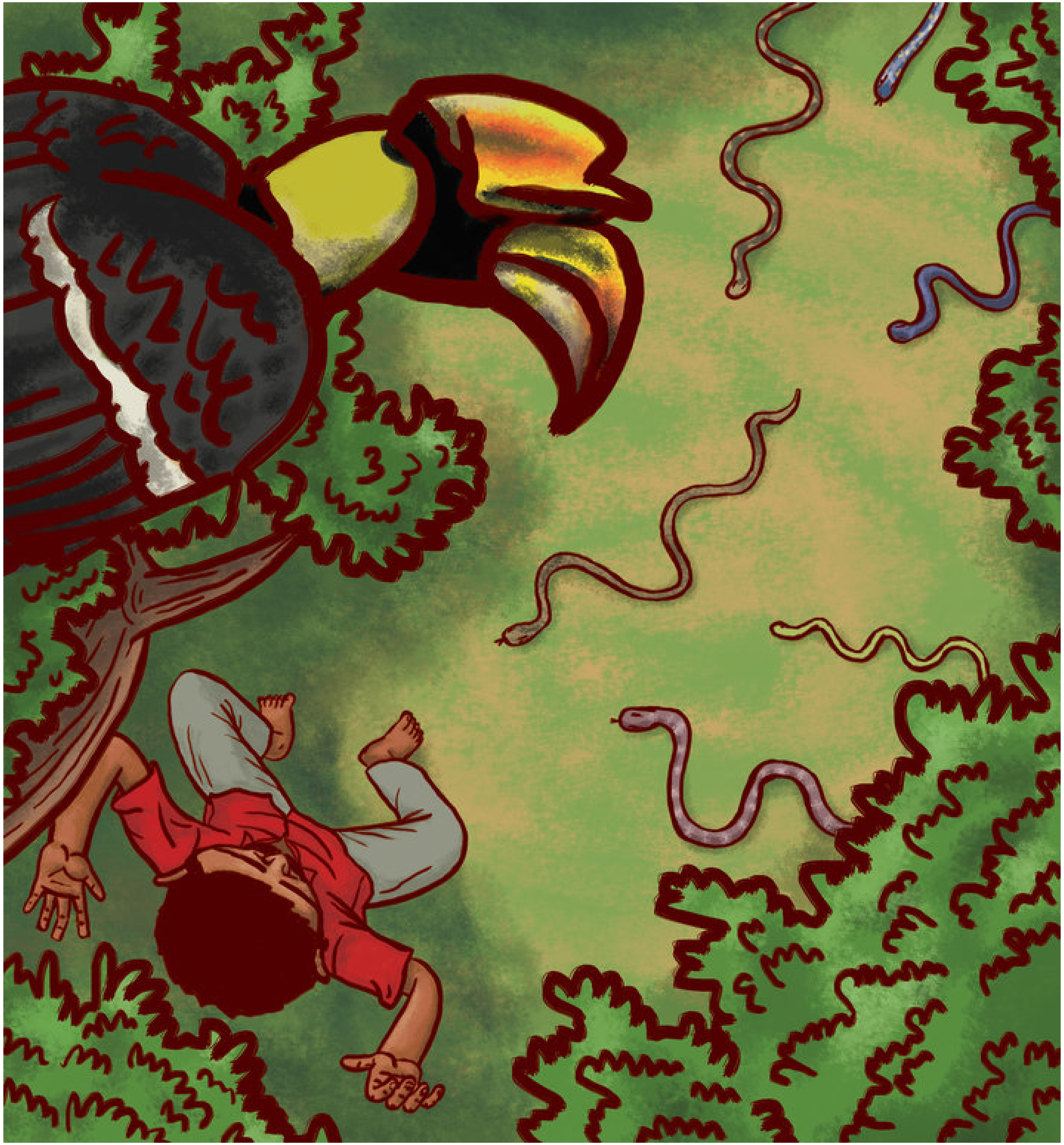
First, came the birds.

They flocked and flew in from near and far, to make their nests in Jadav's tree-place. There were vultures and pelicans and storks and ducks. And warblers and thrushes and wagtails and chats.



Next, came the animals.

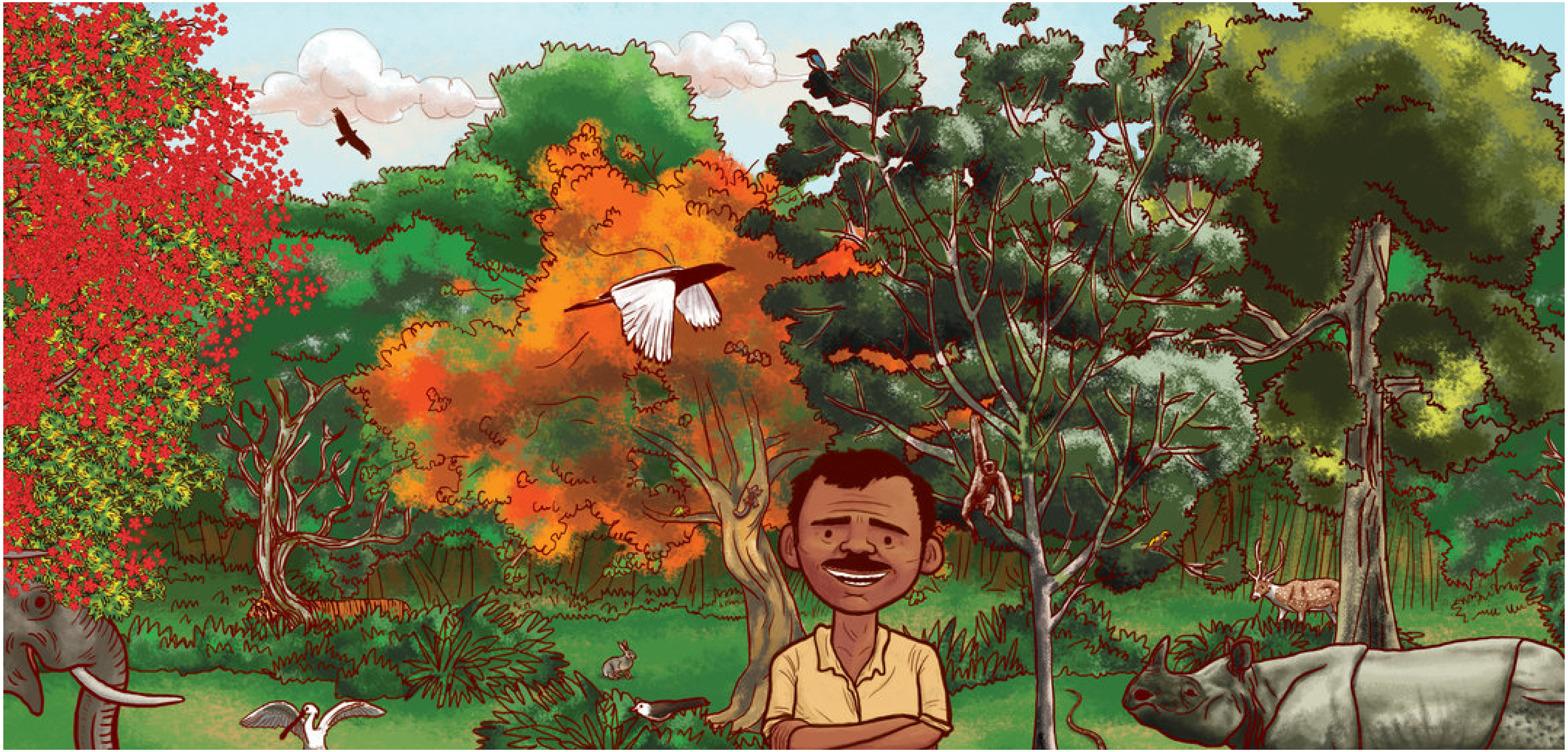
They skipped and swung and sauntered in, to make their homes in the many-trees-place. There were buffaloes and deer and rabbits and gibbons. And elephants and tigers and rhinos.



Finally, there came the snakes.

They slithered and swayed and sashayed in, to cool themselves in the shade of Jadav's trees.

When Jadav saw the snakes, he sat down and cried happy tears. He was so happy that he wasn't even afraid of getting bitten.



Jadav's tree-place had filled with feathers and beaks and wings, with claws and tails and fangs.

There were spots and splashes, stripes and flashes, and green, green, everywhere.

The tree-place was a forest, at last. And Jadav was a happy man.

Then Jadav had another thought.
"Many trees in one place is good, I know.
But how wonderful it'd be if there were many trees in every place!"

So he grabbed his bags of seeds and started walking across the world.
And as he walked, Jadav started planting the seeds in all the no-tree-places he saw.
And he planted. And planted. And planted.

But there are so many no-tree-places in the world.
There are more no-tree-places than tree-places now.
This is terribly sad, but Jadav does not sit down and cry this time.



Jadav plants.



And plants.

And plants some more.

It’s going to be hard work, bringing all the old forests back.

The seas have begun rising, and the winds grow cold.
Towns have become cities, and Jadav is growing old.

But he keeps on planting. And planting. And planting.



Jadav will keep on planting until the whole world is a happy, lovely lots-of-trees-place.



Jadav in Real Life

Jadav 'Mulai' Payeng is a conservationist and recipient of the Padmashree, one of the highest civilian honours awarded by the Indian government. Jadav lives in Majuli, Assam.

At the age of 16, distressed by the sight of dying snakes that had washed up on a sandbar banking the Brahmaputra, Jadav decided to plant some trees in the spot. He started small, with bamboos, and grew an entire forest, plant by painstaking plant. This was back in 1979.

Over the next three decades, Jadav and his tree-planting have managed to change the soil in the barren area. The 550-hectare sandbar is now a lush, dense forest and home to a variety of flora and fauna, including elephants, tigers, apes, deer and many species of local and migratory birds. Jadav continues to visit and nurture his forest every day, planting wherever he finds empty patches.



**Growing Up With a Mango Tree:
a Tree-Planting Activity**

Just ate a mango? Loved it? Want another? You can go to a shop and buy one, of course. But it's a lot more fun (and free!) to use the seed of the mango you just ate and make a few fruits of your own. All you need is time and patience.

First, find a nice patch of empty land near your house. Get a friend, sibling or grown-up to help you plant the seed you saved in that patch. Make sure the soil is loose and there's plenty of sun. It may take several weeks of waiting, watering and watching before your seed turns into a plant, so don't worry and definitely don't hurry.

Once your seed germinates and grows into a healthy mango plant, get ready for a lot more waiting, watering and watching. Take care that your plant doesn't get eaten up by insects or animals, or get stepped on by someone. If all this waiting is making you feel bored, read a few books, sing some songs, and plant some more plants!

After a few years, as you grow taller, your mango plant will grow tall with you, until it becomes a big tree that you can climb and picnic under. This is when the real fun begins. By now, your tree will have started making its own mangoes, which you and your friends can eat. Even better, those mangoes will soon start attracting other mango-loving creatures to your tree: birds, ants, squirrels, bats, monkeys, spiders and lots more.

Some of these creatures will come to eat the fruit, some will come to feed on the tree's sap, some to drink nectar from its flowers, and some creatures will even come to eat some of the other creatures hanging around the tree. But it's not all about eating. Some creatures may come just to rest in your tree's shade, or to take a nap in its branches. Your tree has many different uses for every different creature!

Spend some time every day watching who visits your mango tree, at which time of the day they come, and what they do. Write down what you see in your notebook. Also draw pictures of what you see.

See how much you've done and learned with just one mango seed? Isn't tree-planting fun? Now imagine how much fun Jadav must have had planting his entire forest full of trees!

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Jadav and the Tree-Place
(English)

Jadav has the best job in the world: he makes forests! How does he do it? Read this book to find out!

This is a Level 3 book for children who are ready to read on their own.